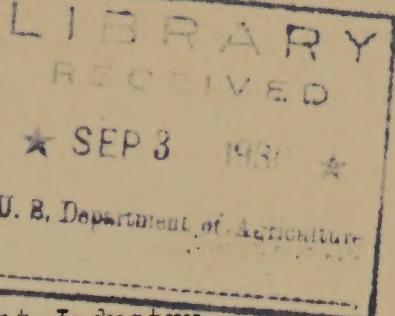


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HELPING THE PASTURES REVIVE

A radio interview by Mr. H.N. Vinall, Bureau of Plant Industry, and Morse Salisbury, Chief of Radio Service, delivered through Station WRC and 37 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, August 18, 1930.

SALISBURY:

Recently we have been asking the men who are in charge of the various types of work at the Department of Agriculture livestock and dairy experiment stations to talk over with you what the workers at experiment stations in drought areas are doing to eke out scanty supplies of feed-stuffs this year. Mr. J.O. Williams of the Bureau of Animal Industry last Thursday discussed with you various types of emergency feed crops; Mr. F.E. Woodward of the Bureau of Dairy Industry went pretty thoroughly into the silage situation with you last Friday. Today we have a specialist who is faced with a problem at Federal experiment stations which is probably most important of all -- maintaining pastures so as to cut as much as possible off the consumption of harvested and stored feed this fall and next spring. Mr. H.N. Vinall, forage crops man of the Bureau of Plant Industry, is very much in demand among the herdsmen of the Federal experiment stations these days, for these herdsmen want from him all sorts of information -- how to manage their permanent pastures so they will go into production early next spring, what's best for emergency hay and pasture crops, how to make sure of getting additional pastures next spring, and so on.

Mr. Vinall, one thing that I have heard a lot of speculation about is whether or not the pastures are badly killed out by the drought. What do you think about that?

Mr. VINALL:

I feel strongly that pastures will come back after the rains. That is they will come back if properly handled. Grass has an amazing vitality. I have just been over the pastures at the livestock and dairy experiment farm at Beltsville, Maryland, and in almost every clump of grass, even though it looks withered and dead, you find a green shoot or two at the center. Of course, I have not been all through the drought affected country, but I do know that it is hard to kill grass that is well established.

SALISBURY:

What do you think is the best course to follow in order to bring the pastures back following the rains?

VINALL:

There is one thing that is absolutely essential; that is to keep the livestock off the pastures this fall so as to give the grass a chance to recuperate. In addition to rest, proper fertilization will give the grass a boost in the spring, and put it in condition to pasture about two weeks earlier than unfertilized.

SALISBURY:

Getting the stock off the pastures this fall means providing some emergency pasture, of course.

VINALL:

Naturally. Mr. Williams gave the Department's recommendations on that last Thursday in this program. Perhaps I should repeat them for the benefit of persons who were not listening then. The fall-sown grains -- winter wheat, rye and barley -- given rains, will make excellent late fall and early spring pastures. Wheat and barley make better pasture than rye on the more productive soils, but rye is to be preferred always on poor soils. In the southern part of the Corn Belt and in the Cotton Belt, locally adapted varieties of rye make much more pasturage than northern grown rye. In the southern part of the drought area, that is, south of Tennessee, winter oats may be preferable to rye as a pasture crop. You may get some hay or fall pasture also in the lower half of the Corn Belt and in the South if you have enough rain to get such crops as millet, sudan grass and cowpeas into the ground by the middle or latter part of this week.

SALISBURY:

And these pastures -- the small grains and so on -- will enable a person to keep stock off the permanent pastures late in the fall and early in the spring so that the permanent pastures will have a chance to recover. Now you spoke, Mr. Vinall, of fertilizing pastures to speed up their convalescence from the drought-fever.

VINALL:

Use of commercial fertilizers on pastures is rapidly becoming a standard farm practice in the dairy regions of the country. It probably can be profitably applied to most pastures in the drought regions this year so as to get a quick, luxuriant growth in the spring when stored feeds will be at their lowest ebb and pastures badly needed. I want to urge all of you listeners who consider doing this, to consult your county agent or state experiment station about the proper kind and amount of fertilizer materials to use on your lands. In general, I should say to apply the phosphorus and potassium late in the fall or early in the winter and the nitrogen in the spring. For the phosphorus carrier super-phosphate probably will be best most everywhere. For the potassium use the sulphate or the muriate of potash. Your soil may be like some of those in southwest Virginia which need no potash at all. In that case you will put on only the phosphate. In this section we use super-phosphate at the rate of 300 to 500 pounds per acre and if potash is needed we add 75 to 100 pounds per acre of the sulphate or muriate to the superphosphate. Then we follow with nitrate of soda at the rate of 100 to 150 pounds per acre early in the spring.

SALISBURY:

Now suppose a person has enough feed to carry most of his livestock through the winter but will run shy in early spring, and therefore wants to get a new pasture, in addition to his regular pastures, in condition to graze by the first part of May. Do you think it is possible to get a growth heavy enough so that it won't be injured by pasturing at that date?

VINALL:

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I know it is possible, for we have done it/Beltsville, Md. We sowed our regular pasture mixture, without a cover crop, in the middle of September, 1928, and we turned cattle on that pasture May 1, 1929. The grass was 8 or 9 inches high, and we could have put them on a week before that without injury to the pasture. Of course I have to admit that we had unusually good conditions in the fall and winter of 1928-1929, but I should think we are entitled to them again this year after the summer we have been through.

SALISBURY:

Now Mr. Vinall won't you please sum up again for us briefly the things that you have said?

VINALL:

Well, to get permanent pastures back into a high state of productivity, it is necessary to get the stock off them this fall so they will have a chance to recuperate after the rains, and in most sections to apply fertilizer before growth starts next spring. Getting the stock off the permanent pastures this fall means providing temporary pasture of some sort and the fall-sown small grains probably offer the best hope for pasture late this fall and early next spring. Given a good winter, it will be possible to sow pasture, without a nurse crop, in the areas south of Pennsylvania and middle Ohio, Indiana and Illinois and Missouri this fall and have them ready to graze fairly early in the spring.

